

# Luxury retreat? It's a Swiss role

**MARLIES BAAL revisits her native Switzerland and discovers a rare opportunity to buy a lakeside home in one of her favourite locations**

**R**EVISITING this beautiful part of Switzerland brought back so many fond childhood memories: of family holidays near Montreux; of picnicking on the hillsides, inhaling the delicious scent of the intensely colourful flowers; of wickedly tempting ice cream stops at inviting cafes; and swimming in the glassy clear waters of Lake Geneva, formed by a retreating glacier millions of years ago.

There was never a boring moment. On cooler summer days we would explore the stunning Lavaux vineyards, tasting the grapes when no one was looking before catching up with our parents who were ambling along the grassy tracks. Happily nothing has changed.

Lake Geneva, its surrounding towns, villages and the French Alps are visible from all 24 apartments in Switzerland's first branded hotel residences development which is being built next to the five-star Le Mirador Kempinski Hotel.

The development is perfectly located at the heart of Europe, not far from France and Italy and ideally placed for summer activities on

lake and land, plus skiing in the winter. The large, well known Swiss resorts of Villars, Gstaad and Verbier are under an hour away, and there are also lovely smaller ones such as Leysin and Les Diablerets (complete with glacier) a little closer, plus Rochers-de-Naye and Les Pléiades nearer still.

The towns of Montreux, Lausanne and

Geneva are wonderful centres of history and culture with their music and arts festivals. The cobblestone streets in Montreux's old town and fairytale Château de Chillon contrast with the glitzy lakeside promenade, shops, casino and imposing memorial statue of the late Freddie Mercury, Montreux's famous former resident.

The new development, Du Parc Kempinski,

is being built in a converted 140-room hotel on Mont Pèlerin, high up on the Unesco World Heritage-protected Lavaux vineyard slopes. It costs £3.2million (SF 4.7million) for a two-bed apartment (180 to 240 square metres), rising to £13-£15.8million (SF 19-23million) for a five-bed penthouse measuring more than 600 sq m.

The developer, Swiss Development Group (SDG), is working closely with the historical monuments and forestry commissions to convert and restore the former hotel which was built in 1906.

The entire building is being reinforced, soundproofed and modernised to satisfy the high standards of the complex Swiss Minergie label requirements which basically ensure optimal use, sourcing and preservation of

energy. "There is even a plan," says Nicolas Garnier, head of SDG, "to provide apartments with electric bicycles so that owners can cycle the short distance to the traditional funicular railway which takes them down to Lake Geneva in just 10 minutes. We are very much intent on supporting the locals in trying to keep traffic volume low and the air clean in this



beautiful spot.”

Interestingly, Mont Pèlerin is also home to a Buddhist monastery and study centre because of its positive geological vibes which are supposed to encourage balance and calm. Visitors to the monastery have included such personalities as Hollywood actress Sharon

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**THE PRICE OF PEACE:** A five-bedroom penthouse in the new Swiss development Du Parc Kempinski, which overlooks Lake Geneva, will cost up to £15.8 million



# 'Ready in 2012, half the homes are now sold'

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Stone and the Buddhist leader the Dalai Lama.

The century-old, eight acres of park and garden will boast groves of conifers interspersed with a romantic rose garden and a five senses garden, accessible by an intricate network of old, restored paths.

"Not only are we preserving all the indigenous plants," says Mr Garnier, "we even made sure that every single goldfish was fished out of an old pond and put into a new home."

American designers have studied the light and space of the apartments and come up with a classical and contemporary furnishing option, including marble in the bathrooms, granite in the kitchens, solid wood for doors and floors and cutting-edge appliances.

Mirrors in the living rooms and bathrooms double up as television screens, and showers offer settings such as chromotherapy (healing with colour) or aromatherapy. The bath temperature can be remotely controlled, a gadget so far only available on super yachts.

The penthouses will benefit from the expertise and craftsmanship of the Italian design house Fendi Casa Mariani, which will work closely with future owners.

Closed circuit TV with biometric recognition will add to supreme security.

Twenty-four hour local concierge services will be provided by the Le Mirador Kempinski hotel.

International requirements will be provided by

Quintessentially, which will also offer a wine-sourcing service to make the world's most coveted wines available to the owners, and a cigar lounge created by Davidoff.

There will also be a Givenchy spa and fitness centre measuring 650 sq m with both indoor and outdoor pools, a dance studio and a 16-seat home cinema and business centre.

Owners will receive a 10-year free membership to the Country Club Le Mirador and a lifetime membership to the stunning 18-hole Golf de Lavaux course nearby, as well as access to the Michelin-starred Trianon restaurant in the Kempinski hotel. The

apartments will be finished in 2012 and half have already been sold.

The Kempinski Group will be organising a rental scheme for those wishing to rent out their homes.

Switzerland has always been attractive to property investors because of its economic stability, superb infrastructure, high quality education system, low mortgage rates (typically between 1 and 2.9 per cent), and central location. The only problem is the strict controls on foreign ownership.

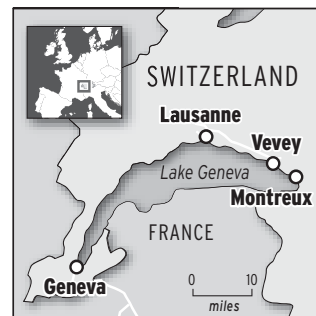
Each canton (similar to an English county, but smaller) grants only a few permits a year to foreigners wanting to buy and only those cantons considered to have tourist potential grant permits.

The only other way to buy a property is to become a resident and apply for what is called a B permit. This means you can live and work in Switzerland and are subject to the Swiss tax regime.

If you are seeking a sound investment outside the euro zone but within easy reach from London, these homes take a lot of beating.

#### ● MORE INFORMATION:

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**LIVING IN STYLE:**  
American designers have come up with a classical and modern furniture option for the spacious living room and the airy bedroom

